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SACRED JOURNEY

THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER ~ APRIL 1999

SACRED JOURNEY™

THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

The mission of Fellowship in Prayer is

to encourage and support

a spiritual orientation to life,

to promote the practice of

prayer,

meditation,

and service to others,

and to help bring about

a deeper spirit of unity

among humankind.

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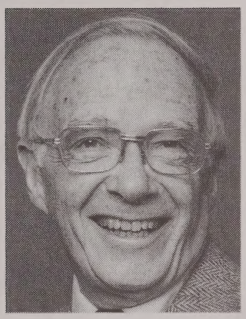
Cover photo by: Sara Wuthnow

FROM THE PRESIDENT



As I write, I'm recovering from a wipeout case of bacterial-plus-viral infection that laid me low for a good two weeks. (It hit the day before I was scheduled to get my annual flu shot!) In any event, I spent far more time than I usually do reading the daily newspaper—a depressing experience.

On the one hand, the economy is booming. Wall Street is setting new record highs. More and more people are making incredible amounts of money (in the United States, anyway) and spending unheard of sums on luxuries undreamt of a few years ago.

On the other hand, accounts of poverty, war, violence, murderous rage, greed, poisoning of the environment, corruption, and selfishness cram the daily paper from the front cover to the last page of the business section.

As people who try to live a life in relationship to the sacred, what can you or I do about any of this? It all seems so hopeless. The problems seem so vast, so entrenched, as to be virtually immune to anything we can do to ameliorate the situation.

But if, as individuals, we can't do much about the problem of structural, systemic evil, we can at least focus on the small, ordinary activities of our ordinary lives and try to think, speak, and act in ways that bring us closer to the

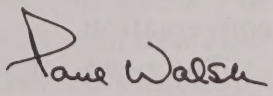
Kingdom of God, or the Divine Spirit, rather than enmeshing us deeper in the causes of the world's suffering.

There are ways to do that, in a conscious, intentional manner. For example, Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese spiritual leader, asks us to closely examine our thoughts and actions with complete honesty. Are we attached to our own views and opinions—or do we make an effort to be open to others' viewpoints and experiences? Do we avoid contact with suffering? Do we close our eyes and ears to the pain of others? Do we share time, energy, and material resources with those in need? Do we hang on to our anger or hostility? Or do we let them go and make an effort to stay in touch with what is joyful and healing both inside and around us?

In everyday life we can bring happiness to ourselves and others and prevent much suffering, Thich Nhat Hanh suggests, if we avoid words that create discord and conflict. We can make an effort not to say untruthful things, or spread news that we don't know to be certain, or criticize or condemn things of which we're not sure.

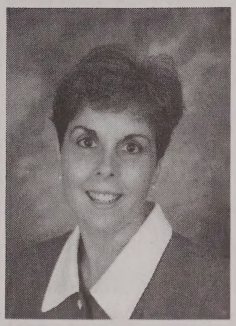
These are all small-seeming acts of goodness and peacemaking, but we are all interconnected, and everything we say and do radiates out into the universe and adds to or diminishes the systemic evil that engulfs us. We have all been given the freedom to choose our response to what life offers us, and by consciously watering the seeds of loving kindness planted in each of us at birth, we can contribute importantly to our own and others' happiness.

God between you and all harm,



Paul Walsh

FROM THE EDITOR



Eight months from now, on Christmas Eve, Pope John Paul II plans to swing wide a long-sealed basilica door of St. Peter's. This symbolic act will inaugurate a year of jubilee. According to the book of Leviticus every fiftieth year is sacred, a time of freedom, restoration, and celebration.

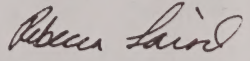
According to John Paul II: "The joy of a Jubilee is above all the joy that is based on the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God and neighbor." One of the Pope's expressed priorities for reconciliation is between Christians and Jews. In this issue of *Sacred Journey* we invite you to an interfaith roundtable discussion between Cardinal Cassidy from the Vatican, Rabbi Klenicki from the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, and Reverend Franklin Littell, a Methodist minister and professor from The Robert Stockton College. Frederick Olessi, a trustee of Fellowship in Prayer, arranged for these three wise men from Christian and Jewish traditions to witness to faith together. Turn to *Questions & Answers* for a full account of our breakfast conversation.

The need for interfaith encounters is further explored by Marianna Neal in a *Spiritual Community* fea-

ture while Susan Gregg-Schroeder, a Christian minister, describes insights gained from her visit to a Buddhist monk in *"Circles of Life."* Lourdes Brache tells of her travels to visit joy-filled Juanista nuns in the Dominican Republic and Richard Boeke describes four daily spiritual practices gleaned from his global journey. Don't miss our *Pilgrimage* feature as Philip Solem recounts praying and pedaling with his wife, Jackie, as they cycled from Paris to Jerusalem. In anticipation of the turning of the seasons, revel in June Moreau's reminders of Spring's ecstasy in "Earth Psalms."

Here at *Sacred Journey* we are busy planning a jubilee celebration of our own. In the year 2000 Fellowship in Prayer will commemorate fifty years of calling people of all faith traditions to prayer, meditation, and service. We invite you to join us, June 16–18, 2000 for *Companions on the Sacred Journey,* a life-enhancing weekend in Princeton. Flip to page 29 for more information. Plan to attend: I look forward to meeting you.

Blessings,



Rebecca Laird

P.S. Have you sent us your e-mail address? Contact us at **editorial@sacredjourney.org** to receive our new electronic newsletter. It's free and delivered bimonthly directly to your desk!

Rabbi Leon Klenicki and Cardinal Edward I. Cassidy

Courtesy of the Julius and Dorothy Koppelman Holocaust/Genocide Resource Center

WITNESSING TO FAITH TOGETHER:

AN INTERFAITH DISCUSSION

Cardinal Edward I. Cassidy
Rabbi Leon Klenicki
Reverend Franklin Littell

On March 16, 1998, the Vatican issued a document, "We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah." The document rehearses the atrocities of the Holocaust, the Shoah, then proclaims, "We pray that our sorrow for the tragedy which the Jewish people has suffered in our century will lead to a new relationship with the Jewish people. We wish to turn awareness of past sins into a firm resolve to build a new future in which there will be no more anti-Judaism among Christians or anti-Christian sentiment among Jews, but rather a shared mutual respect, as befits those who adore the one Creator and Lord and have a common father in faith, Abraham."

When the chief author of the Vatican document, Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy, traveled to New Jersey to participate in "Christianity and Judaism: History, The Holocaust and Reconciliation in The Third Millennium," sponsored by The Julius and Dorothy Koppelman Holocaust/Genocide Resource Center and the Campus Ministry at Rider University, SACRED JOURNEY *sat down with him. We were*

joined by Rabbi Leon Klenicki, the Director of the Department of Interfaith Affairs of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, and the Reverend Franklin Littell, Distinguished Ida E. King Visiting Professor at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey and a minister of the United Methodist Church. A respectful, indeed loving, conversation ensued over breakfast. We share it with you in hopes that it will encourage your efforts toward renewed relationships in your own communities.

Rebecca Laird: What are we working toward when we engage in interfaith dialogue between the Jewish and Christian communities? How will we recognize reconciliation? What is the goal?

Cardinal Cassidy: I see our work having two aspects: One is reconciliation, the way of moving out of an experience where the dominant relationship was one of suspicion and lack of trust created by history and by stereotypes, and moving into a new relationship based on trust and a greater understanding one of the other. Secondly, by establishing that trust we are then open to see what we can achieve together as two faith communities who have a great influence upon the societies in which we live. If we are able, having been reconciled, we then move ahead and work together for the good of our societies. What we want is to move forward in a process.

You've mentioned trust as one of the hallmarks of interfaith relationships. Speak to how trust develops between Christians and Jews.

Cardinal Cassidy: You develop trust by the way you work together and relate together. How do you create trust in any family or any society? Simply by working in such a way that you gain the trust of the other person. The things that you say, the things that you do must be consistent. Trust comes, when people say, "Ah, he's a person who is sincere, we can trust him." When actions are in conformity with words, trust is created.

Rabbi Klenicki: I would say from the very beginning that I personally feel that our encounter of dialogue is a call of God. After what happened in Europe after the Holocaust, an interfaith approach of talking to each other is a call of God that we should be witnesses together in a universe that has known places like the Gulag or Auschwitz or the jails of the generals in Latin America. We must work out the meaning of that call of God for the purpose of understanding, knowing, and overcoming prejudices. This work brings us to the stage of reconciliation. Reconciliation means that I might have to change certain attitudes that I have toward the fellow Christian or other religious person, but at the same time, I have to do it from my background, from my being Jewish.

Reverend Littell: I was thinking as I listened to Cardinal Cassidy, of the difference between what our ultimate hopes and expectations may be and the small steps that we take in the meantime. I think there is no question confronting Christian theologians more seriously than the question of reconciliation. In back of this inquiry is the question: In what time and under whose authority, may trust, reconciliation, and forgiveness oc-

cur? And the answer, of course, is that it is in the hands of God. We can do what we should, and we may take small steps. Still I'm troubled that there are too many Christians who want reconciliation quickly. In the final analysis, our responsibility is to undertake credible acts so that in the time ahead it will be possible for our Jewish brethren to see us differently because they have seen acts that differ from what they had to look at fifty years ago.

Rabbi Klenicki: In this process of searching for reconciliation, we have to go through a real inner stage of what in Hebrew is called, *teshuva*, or in Christian theology, *metanoia*. This is a real change of ourselves, and this is very difficult. I cannot change what my father thought about Christians because his experience was in Poland during World War II. But I have had a different experience. The process of *teshuva/metanoia* is crucial. Otherwise, we are just doing what I call tea and sympathy, but it will not become a real process of dialogue and encounter.

Cardinal Cassidy: I would only add that true, inner change was seen as the fundamental first step at the beginning of our involvement in the whole ecumenical movement at the Second Vatican Council. There could be no progress in our relations with the Jewish people without a conversion of heart. We have to look at what happened, and we have to look at ourselves. This requires a deep reflection upon our own individual selves, upon our own community, and upon our own teachings. We cannot stay where we are and move ahead. To move ahead you have to first of all, stir up your

own self-understanding, your relationship with God and then to see the reconciliation question within that relationship.

One of you said that we have to engage in "credible acts." What is a credible act? Where do we begin in our local communities?

Reverend Littell: Let me give one concrete illustration. Since 1981 officially, Yom Hashoah, the day of remembrance of the Holocaust, is a national calendar day by action of the President and of Congress. Officially each year, governors and mayors issue edicts and a service is held in the rotunda in Washington. Now there is a tendency in the smaller communities to let Yom Hashoah be observed in synagogues. Last year the major service in Southern New Jersey was held in a Roman Catholic church. If you are asking what Christians can do, we can see to it that Yom Hashoah is not allowed to drift into a purely Jewish occasion. That would be disastrous because the most serious threat to Jewish thought and spiritual well-being now is "victimology." I say in my graduate seminars, again and again, if there is nothing but "victimology" forget it. Leave it in the hands of God and get on with life. On the other hand, on the Christian side of the ledger, it's important that we remember, and that we do not rush to premature closure, which is also a great temptation, but that we let the memory work and the prayers of the congregations work, until the Spirit gives us some light and wisdom which we do not yet sufficiently possess.

Rabbi Klenicki: I am concerned about this tendency of portraying and seeing the Jewish community as victims. My family was a victim in the 1940's and they were gassed in 1943 in Auschwitz, but I don't want to think in terms of victims. I want to think in terms of life. A phrase said by Victor Frankl when he left Dachau in 1945 is a model for my life. He said, *Despite everything, let us say yes to life.* The Holocaust is the symbol of the diabolic possibilities of a human being. Stalin of Russia, Pinochet of Chile . . . the examples of limitless human evil are innumerable. But Frankl reminds us to emphasize life and the opportunity of life that God has given us, and to emphasize creation, and our duty to recreate. For that reason, I feel that as time passes by slowly, we in the Christian/Jewish dialogue will have to consider the possibility of joint prayer, not in a synchronistic way, but by sharing the presence of God.

How can I project what I feel in the morning when I pray, when I get up in the morning? I am a rabbi but I often go to Mass. I sit there and I try to understand and to discover, the numinous, the unique experience of God in that liturgical exercise. I think trying to understand the spirituality of the other person of faith is a very important step forward.

I suspect most Catholics, Protestants, or Jews have never experienced going to the synagogue or to mass in order to enter into the spiritual practices or rituals in another faith tradition. Should we?

Cardinal Cassidy: I'd like to take that up because I think you asked a practical question, and I think there

is a practical answer. People often say to me: "We see that we need to do something, but what is it that we can do?" My first answer is to say, "Well, sit down and think about your own relationship with your Jewish neighbors and friends. Have you ever made any attempt to come a little closer? Have you ever invited them over, and so on?" That's very personal. But, we could do much more at the level of local communities. I have heard rabbis say in my office in Rome that to see a Catholic priest meet them and greet them in their synagogue greatly changes their understanding of Catholics. Suddenly, someone offers a credible act, somebody simply expresses respect and affection. This is also important the other way around. The Catholic community needs to see the local rabbis in their churches. We could also encourage communities to work together on local concerns which don't interfere with their separate identities or faith understanding. That's a part of being together, living together, working together. So I hope your readers will say together with their religious leaders, "What can we do to know each other better, to understand each other more fully, and then to express our common understanding in some form of action in favor of the more needy in our communities?" Asking these questions and then acting credibly would be a tremendous breakthrough.

Rabbi Klenicki: I would also emphasize the need to be alert to the ever present danger of anti-Semitism. It is a disease that is in the collective unconscious of many countries, if I may use Jung's expression. Placing crosses at Auschwitz, a place that is the symbol and reality of our death, is a real insult to all of us. We came to an

agreement in Poland that we had to leave Auschwitz as it is to teach new generations what human beings, if we can call the Nazi SS human beings, can do to other people. Why build a supermarket or a mall near Auschwitz? These are real insults to be avoided. If we don't take a stand in that respect, we might repeat many of the mistakes of the past.

Cardinal Cassidy: What Leon said is very true about anti-Semitism. There is still a tendency, especially in certain political situations or economic difficulties, for people to look for a scapegoat, and that is something we have to be very careful about. I would also insist upon the fact that there must be two sensitivities. We are trying to create within our Catholic community a sensitivity toward all those things which might create or encourage anti-Semitism. There is also a need for a sensitivity on the part of the Jewish community toward the problems of the other communities in these difficult situations. Auschwitz is a very obvious example. We have had these tragic developments in recent months in Auschwitz, but sometimes the reactions of the Jewish community create a greater problem because they are not keeping in mind a sensitivity to the Polish people. The Poles also were victims of the Nazis. This is a very delicate area, but I think it is absolutely essential that we all try to keep in mind what our actions mean to the other community, lest we create again that kind of enmity and suspicion which was so much a part of our relations in the past. A lack of sensitivity is a problem that is at the heart of future good relations between our communities.

Rabbi Klenicki: I would disagree with Cardinal Cassidy about the question of our overreaction. One has to recall that millions of Jews were gassed in Auschwitz and for us that place has a very special meaning. We do realize that in the case of Poland, anti-Semitism hasn't finished. It continues with the same strength as before. And it is very painful, especially for me since I can trace my family for four hundred years in Poland. I have a basic sympathy for Poland, but one has to stress that sometimes the Jews are used and abused, symbolically and physically, by the Polish population. I can understand historic and economic reasons for change but that has to be worked out, especially by the Polish Bishop in order to overcome the teaching of contempt.

Let me ask you this question, Rabbi Klenicki. If you had a group of Catholics and Protestants sitting before you, what would you say about your own faith community that you don't think is being heard?

Rabbi Klenicki: I feel that we are entering into a new stage of a dialogue relationship, which is a difficult one because many people still want to stay in the old pattern of denouncing the other or defending themselves. In this new stage we must try to understand the other person as a person of God. I feel that the Jewish community has to go back to the first century to try to learn more about when Christianity branched off from biblical, rabbinic Judaism. We have to try to reach beyond our personal memories to understand how deeply Jesus was related to rabbinic Judaism. If Jews understand Christianity as an arm of God, as a part of the message

of God to the world, that is as important as Christians understanding the unique role that Jews play in the convenant relationship. We all have to project a new vision of our relationship to each other.

I have terrible memories of my youth with a right-wing Catholic professor, but my children never experienced that in the United States, after Vatican II. I still remember when I was young in Argentina before Vatican II, that Passion Week was very difficult for us in the Jewish community. Downtown was covered with leaflets blaming the Jews for what was done to Jesus. I do not remember a bishop or priest saying anything in response to these terrible leaflets. Not standing up and speaking out against this kind of wrong is criminal. Yet these memories can't be changed. So it is not a question of changing our memories, it takes building understanding and a common language.

Reverend Littell: I would like to be sure that we've raised the special responsibility which we have as Americans to make our system of religious voluntary support and discipline work. One of the great difficulties dealing today with my Jewish brethren, particularly the older ones, is their sense that it was Christians that persecuted them in Europe because everybody in the old state church system who wasn't baptized was either in prison or else a Jew. That's not the way it is in America. Christians in this country voluntarily participate in church and charity initiatives. We, Christians and Jews alike, need to prove to ourselves and to the living God, that without any state coercion, without any of the terrible structures of power that existed for centuries, we can, as people of faith, make liberty work.

We are called of God as believing people to express our freedom in terms of love and fraternity, compassion and creativity across the lines.

Rabbi Klenicki: We need a healing of the heart in order to overcome the memories of the past, the memories of the present, and try to work out together our testimony to God. Healing is a key word in our work of reconciliation.

What motivates and sustains you when it's hard, when there is little measurable progress in your interfaith endeavors?

Cardinal Cassidy: Leon Klenicki gave the answer at the beginning of this discussion. We believe that this is what the Lord wants us to do, what we are called to do at this time. If we are to be honest and sincere, we don't have any choice about this work. Since that is what we have to do, then we do it very willingly. Interfaith work is not something I do against my feelings. I don't feel as if I'm carrying out something that is very hard and rooted in a sad past—not at all. I find it is full of joy because I have come to know in a new way the Jewish religion. Judaism is the link between the branch and the roots, or the two branches on the same root, whichever way you wish to put it. There is a great deal of joy and sustenance in this new understanding. There are moments when things are a bit difficult, when you find someone rather upsets you, but I don't think that can be compared with the joy and the satisfaction from being involved in this cause which must be very close to God's will for us. There are two covenants and these

two covenants, in the mystery of God's providence, continue side by side. In the past people of the two covenants have been at loggerheads—they have been at war—but that surely couldn't be the will of God.

Rabbi Klenicki: Interfaith work is a call of God for me. From my youth, I have been very much interested in Christianity. To the surprise and dismay of my teachers at the seminary when I studied for the rabbinate, I wrote my thesis of philosophy on St. John of the Cross. It was a very technical thesis about the language of St. John of the Cross and its similarities to mystical Jewish theological terminology. I have been long involved in this call of God to relate to the Christians. What is the meaning and mystery, I don't know. Perhaps one day I will know, but I'll continue despite some great disappointments because I feel that any creative work involves happiness and disappointment.

Reverend Littell: Well, I want to give a brief Wesleyan testimony. I was licensed to preach in the Methodist fellowship some sixty-five years ago, in Davenport, Iowa, and I have thought so many times about the time of my own conversion in November of 1938. I had a second conversion after World War II, after the Holocaust. My second conversion was like a mountain, and I climbed over it, and on this side of the mountain, nothing is ever the same again; not your family, not your job, not your neighbor, not your country, nothing is ever the same again. To realize that something terrible happened to the Jewish people is self-evident. But it is also the worst thing that happened in the whole history of Christianity. It raises a credibility crisis as far as Chris-

tianity is concerned. The Jewish people are not going to be able to get out of the stance of being victims—even with the existence of the state of Israel—without compassion and understanding and fraternal work. Christians certainly aren't going to be able to get out of this swamp of half-suppressed guilt feelings without Jewish colleagues working with us. Interfaith dialogue combined with work in local communities is imperative for the health, spiritual well-being, and the future of both communities of faith.

Breakfast ended, we adjourned to a nearby chapel and during a joint service we prayed the following prayer:

We are your people, and you are our God.
We are your work, and you our Creator.
We are your servants, and you our Master.
We are your congregation, and you our Portion.
We are your inheritance, and you our Lot.
We are your flock, and you our Shepherd.
We are your vineyard, and you our Keeper.
We are your faithful, and you our Beloved.
We are your devoted people, and you our exalted God.[1]

[1]*From* Jews and Christians: A Dialogue Service About Prayer *by Rabbi Leon Klenicki and Rev. Bruce W. Robbins. ©1995, Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL.*

Four Spiritual Practices: Waterfall, Mirror, Walking, Giving

Richard Boeke

I often buy books on spiritual practice looking for insights. Recently I found *The Five Stages of the Soul* by Harry Moody and David Carroll. In one telling passage, a New York woman says, "I had this unquestioning belief in the importance of achievement . . . . Now when I look back, I can see it was all a kind of con job I did on myself. I once heard a public speaking coach say that the greatest things in speech making is sincerity. If you can fake that, he said, then you've really got it made. It is a funny way to put it, but I think that is what I did in my thirties and forties. I was faking it. But in complete sincerity."

When I was a minister in Berkeley, California, twenty-five years ago, I remember confronting a Mahaguru with the words, "But then, you are a fake!" He said, "But I'm a real fake." It is not enough to be a real fake. All of us want the "real thing." We each want to be a real person.

Much of my spiritual quest has been about becoming a real person. One real person I met in my life was Dr. Victor Frankl, who survived the death camps of Auschwitz and

Dr. Richard Boeke, a frequent writer for Sacred Journey, *is Secretary of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists. He lives in England.*

Dachau and wrote one of the great books of our century, *Man's Search for Meaning*. Frankl taught that we always have some power. We cannot always control our circumstances, but we can control our attitudes, our responses, our prayers. In 1997, during the week Victor Frankl died, I visited Auschwitz. Earlier I traveled to Dachau and Hiroshima. Matching the journey of the world has been for me a journey of the soul.

I have learned spiritual disciplines from my study and travels, especially from the Orient. Yet, it is not enough to know them, they must be practiced. I have four daily spiritual practices which are important to me.

The Waterfall

On each of my visits to Tsubaki Shinto Shrine in Japan, the high moment is always standing under the ice cold waterfall, cleansing body and soul. Most of us don't have a waterfall, but we do have showers. Each morning I take body and soul into the waterfall of purification and renewal. With a cold shower each morning, I leave the past behind and enter a new day. We can learn from the past, but at some point if we do not leave it behind, it will crush us. I wash off yesterday and start today.

The Mirror

Looking in the mirror is important, not only in Japan, but in many traditions. For Unitarians it reminds us of the call of Socrates and Emerson, "Know thyself." Some mornings I put off shaving and looking myself in the face because I have not done the spiritual work I need to do. Other days I go to London and sit before the self-portraits of Rembrandt

or Van Gogh. The bandaged ear in Van Gogh's self-portrait is a reminder that self-torture does not lead to enlightenment. A little devotional each day can clean the mirror.

Walking Meditation

My third practice is walking out of the house and into nature. I move breath, body, and blood by taking in the wonder of public footpaths during the changing seasons. In April, England will be in full blossom with millions of daffodils, bluebells, and singing birds. Read some Emerson and Thoreau. Then go out and practice what they practiced. Life is breath. We journey in and we journey out.

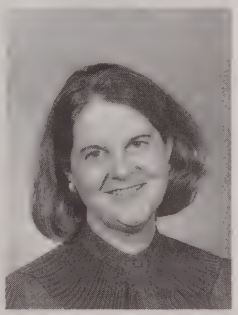
Giving

I give self and money to what I love. A Japanese Christian wrote, "Penniless, for a while I can live, but it breaks my heart to know I cannot give." One of my hardest tasks is to teach new Unitarians, especially in countries that have had state-supported religions, the importance of giving to support what you love. In the words of Unitarian poet, James Russell Lowell at the end of *The Vision of Sir Launfal*, "The Holy Supper is kept indeed, in whatso we share with another's need. Not what we give, but what we share, for the gift without giver is bare."

Let me move through the paces now:
Awaken the dawn
Raise the Chi
Center me.
In my bath discover new birth
In my mirror affirm my worth
In my walking awaken to earth
In my giving share sorrow and mirth.

Circles of Life

Susan Gregg-Schroeder



It was late at night when we drove to a secluded, dimly-lit house. We had prearranged to meet with a Buddhist monk, but had to postpone the meeting until this late hour because the monk needed to make an emergency visit to someone in the hospital.

In the night's shadows, I could scarcely make out the large sitting Buddha near the entrance of the house. But what caught my attention was the metal circle with spokes resembling a wheel, hanging over the figure of the Buddha.

We approached the door to find shoes of every size and description filling the entry way. We could hear muffled chanting from somewhere inside. Soon, after our tentative knock on the door, a young monk appeared and led us upstairs where we had a fascinating discussion. We were offered tea, and we noticed how everyone deferred

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in reverence to our host. Only later did we discover that we had been sitting at the feet of a Master teacher who had founded monasteries all over the world, including his native Thailand, Norway, and Australia.

After I had finally managed to somewhat discreetly sit cross-legged while balancing my cup of sweet tea, I began to look around. Noticing that the Buddha in the room had the same "wheel" above his head, I asked our host about the wheel. I was told that it represented our eternal journey in this life and continuing into the next.

Tom Dunham

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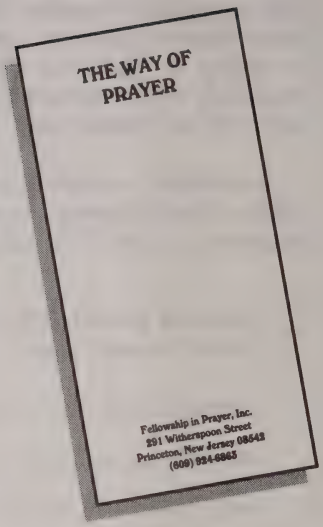

* * * * * * *

Please use this space to tell us your thoughts about this publication, *Sacred Journey.*

Buddha's teachings say that life is suffering. We cannot avoid suffering as we move around the rim of the wheel, which represents perpetual change and the transitory nature of life. But the wheel also symbolizes wholeness or completion because the wheel revolves around the center axis that does not move. That center point represents the presence of the divine. If we remain aware of this center point, we are strengthened for whatever lies ahead.

I couldn't help but reflect on the many religious traditions that use the circle as a symbol for our spiritual journey. I recalled the deep meanings surrounding the Native American Medicine Wheel. Others that came to mind include the Celtic cross with its intertwining circles and the ancient mazes and labyrinths of medieval cathedrals.

Many religious traditions use the circle as a symbol for the spiritual journey.

All these circles of life have a center. It is this center point that grounds us in the midst of the many changes in our lives. It is at the center point where we experience the energy and power that turns the wheel. It is at this center point where we connect with the Everywhere Spirit.

When we rest in the center point, we find that we have come home again to the place from which we started. But because of the journey, it is as if we had arrived home for the first time. In our journey around the circles of life, we become new persons over and over again.

It is not through the way in which someone speaks about God that I can see whether that person has passed through the crucible of Divine Love, but through the way the person speaks to me about things here on earth.

- Simone Weil

Love alone is capable of uniting living beings in such a way as to complete and fulfill them, for it alone takes them and joins them by what is deepest within themselves.

- Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

You have made me so rich, oh God, please let me share out Your beauty with open hands. My life has become an uninterrupted dialogue with You, oh God, one great dialogue. Sometimes when I stand in some corner of the camp, my feet planted on Your earth, my eyes raised toward Your Heaven, tears sometimes run down my face, tears of deep emotion and gratitude. At night, too, when I lie in my bed and rest in You, oh God, tears of gratitude run down my face, and that is my prayer. I have been terribly tired for several days, but that, too, will pass; things come and go in a deeper rhythm and people must be taught to listen to it, it is the most important thing we have to learn in this life. I am not challenging You, oh God, my life is one great dialogue with You. I may never become the great artist I would really like to be, but I am already secure in You, God. Sometimes I try my hand at turning out small profundities and uncertain short stories, but I always end up with just one

single word: God. And that says everything and there is no need for anything more. And all my creative powers are translated into inner dialogues with You; the beat of my heart has grown deeper, more active and yet more peaceful, and it is as if I were all the time storing up inner riches.

- *Etty Hillesum*, An Interrupted Life
(Written from Westerbork, a transit camp, the last stop before Auschwitz)

You know always in your heart that you need God more than everything; but do you not know too that God needs you—in the fulness of His eternity needs you? How would man exist, how would you exist, if God did not need him, did not need you? You need God, in order to be—and God needs you, for the very meaning of your life . . . We take part in creation, meet the Creator, reach out to Him, helpers and companions.

- *Martin Buber*

The more our age refuses to see the full face of the universe and restricts itself to the sight of a tiny fraction of its skin, the more anxious I become when I consider the universe in its eternal rhythm, and the more I wish to oppose the general current.

- *Marc Chagall*

How can we eliminate religious prejudice when each religion wants to dominate? We need to see other people as people like ourselves—not as opponents or aliens. We need constant communication, meeting, dialogue for deeper understanding of each other's religion. Then you can develop genuine respect, genuine harmony. And from that genuine brotherhood will develop.

- *The Dalai Lama*

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And in Service Let Us Love

Lourdes F. Brache

Like butterflies with shimmering, soft, and delicate wings Juanista nuns move endlessly, transforming each day into a day of service, prayer, song, and love in the small community of Bayaguana in the Dominican Republic. For a week I experienced the silence of their meditation on the gospel amidst the noisy town; their exuberant joy in nature, their dedication, and above all, the love they have for those who come in contact with them. The refrain of a morning song still rings fresh in my ears: ". . . and in service let us love."

I have been acquainted with the Juanistas for over two years now, since they administer the Catholic agency I collaborate with on a sustainable agriculture project. Although I had visited their simple and well-kept apartment many times, I knew little of their daily practices.

One winter I accepted their invitation to be a guest. Sharing living quarters with these nuns gave me a glimpse of their daily lives. Juanistas take their name from John the Evangelist who is their role model for having preached and lived in early Christian communities. The Juanista com-

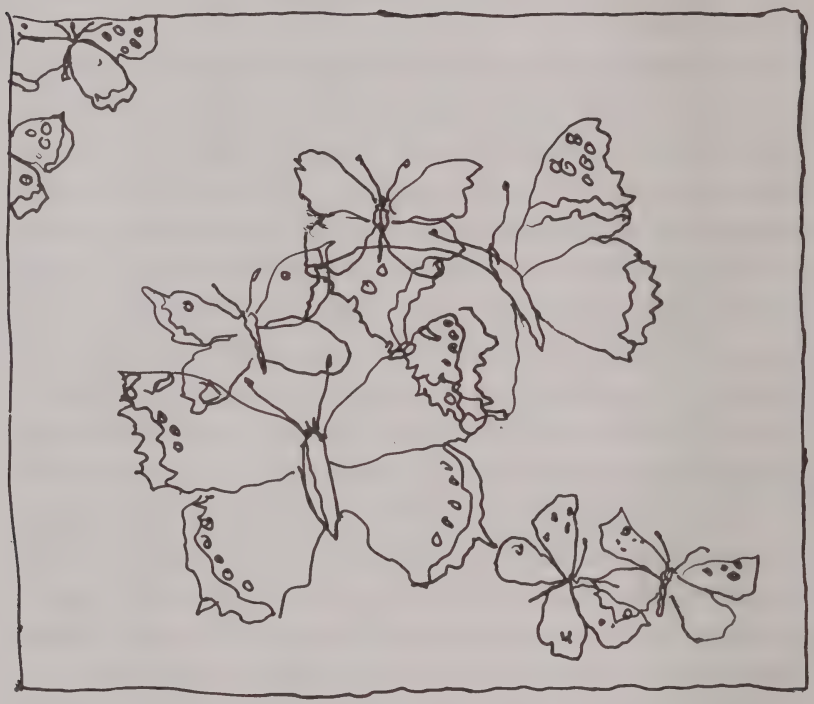
Lourdes F. Brache is a Catholic and member of Wisdom's Goldenrod Philosophical Society. Originally from the Dominican Republic, she resides in Ithaca, New York and works at Cornell's International Institute for Food, Agriculture and Development.

munity was founded by a progressive Colombian bishop, Jorge Murciano, in the 1930s. Murciano believed in social justice and intended the religious community to engage in social activism through their ministry in the Catholic Church. True to their community advocacy, Juanista nuns live in an apartment integrated in a local neighborhood as opposed to a convent. They are organizers, civil rights educators, health and nutritional extensionists, counselors, and above all, messengers of love.

Every morning they get up at dawn to welcome the new day in prayer and song. During my visit, I usually woke up to the sound of their singing. Breakfast followed the 7:00 A.M. mass, after which everyone left to do their daily tasks. Marianita, a shy seventeen-year-old, is the youngest of the four women in the congregation. She attends the local high school in the morning and in the afternoon is busy with religious and social activities. Marianita is a very mature teenager and is popular with the young women in her neighborhood because she has a beautiful voice. She is followed in age by Elsa who also loves music. Elsa is vibrant with energy and throughout my stay showed a great deal of patience as she waited for papers to be signed, supplies to arrive, or people to assemble. Then comes Luisa, who is quiet and reserved, and loves plants and animals. She is a health educator with a specialty in kindness. Marina, the head of the congregation, is a woman in her forties with a penchant for feminine and poverty issues. The Juanistas are constantly and unconditionally giving of themselves. It is remarkable how very ordinary acts become extraordinary in the hands of these women.

During the week-long stay, I spent quite a bit of time with Marina as she travelled with me to make field visits. One morning, after walking for several miles in the nearby

national park, we noticed how much forest had been burnt recently. Marina stood by my side, almost in tears, mourning the forest's destruction. Every step became a prayer for restoration. She laughed with childlike joy (and almost lost her footing in the ravine) when she pursued a fluttering butterfly in the denuded mountains! At noon we stood in the desolate hills prayerfully reciting the *Angelus.*



Lucy Graves McVicker

The next day upon returning from the field, I was invited to visit a farmer who had broken his back and neck while he was harvesting coconuts. We entered the one-room dwelling and lying on a bed was a young man in a full-body cast. Marina was smiling. She greeted the paraplegic man as if he was Jesus himself. She asked about his health, his family—he has two children and no wife—and about his

plans for the future without ever losing the spark in her eyes. One would think it's crazy to speak about the future in this condition but somehow, Marina knew that this would be a tool to get this person who had been lying in bed for days to think about future possibilities. He may have been less able but was still alive. The visit was short, the impact long! The eye contact, the gentleness, and the loving presence would remain in my heart for a long time. Midweek, after a bumpy ride in a pickup truck, Marina and I went to stretch our legs, and a conversation about the future work plans turned into a metaphysical discourse on detachment and forgiveness.

It is remarkable how very ordinary acts become extraordinary in the hands of these women.

During the early evenings, very much in keeping with local tradition, the apartment was bustling with young visitors. Children dropped by to say hello and neighbors stopped to chat and bring sweets. My week had ended too quickly. The last evening, during one of the regular power blackouts, I stood with the Juanistas gazing at the starry sky and the full moon as if we had nothing better to do than being.

The most important lesson I learned from the Juanista nuns was the importance of living in the present moment and loving unconditionally to make every act sacred and every person holy.

Healing Our Images–Healing Our World

Marianna K. Neal

There is little doubt that our world is becoming more violent. Murder, terrorism and widespread abuses plague us. We find ourselves growing more fearful and less trusting. We wish it were different.

We see conflict in families, among nations and between religious groups. Although history points out that this has always existed, it seems more prevalent today, possibly because our media bombards us with graphic descriptions and pictures.

In our search for peace, we must learn to accept each other despite our differences. We will never get along until we no longer think and act as if we have the best culture, government or even the "one, true" religion.

How can we as religious individuals begin the overwhelming process of healing our world? Perhaps one way is to become more accepting and less judgmental of others–especially those whose faith differs from ours. Religious persecution is not limited to the early Christians or the people of Northern Ireland, Bosnia, or Tibet today. There are many subtle (and not so subtle) forms of persecution to examine and

Marianna K. Neal is a retired teacher who volunteers her time to the American Cancer Society. She lives in Fairborn, Ohio with her husband, Bill. They have three sons.

to consider in prayer. How often are families torn apart because members "lose" their faith or marry someone from another religion? What are the insensitive ways that we imply that our religion is superior to others'?

Maybe the answer includes expanding our image of the Ultimate by allowing those of other faiths, both Christian and non-Christian, to share their beliefs with us. To dialogue is very different from trying to convince someone about the "truth" of our own religion. Mutual sharing offers hope of better understanding one another.

Many Christians say they respect other religions yet insist that because they "have Jesus" they alone have the "fullness of faith." This attitude hardly encourages mutual sharing or brings peace. How can we remain exclusive and open our hearts to others at the same time?

We can learn much through dialogue. We do not have to be afraid to learn about other faiths. We only need to fear not being willing to allow our own perceptions to be expanded. Rather than "boxing up" our religion to keep it "pure" we should assume that the more we learn about how others, especially those of different cultures, understand spirituality, the deeper our own faith will become. Dialogue allows the Spirit to move in our lives.

Recently television news stories angered the Hindu and Jewish communities. They thought these reports belittled their cultures and religions. They appear to have taken personally what was most likely never intended to be interpreted that way. These are not unique situations. We often perceive, rightly or wrongly, that our beliefs are being attacked. Feeling misunderstood pervades our daily lives as well as the political arena.

If dialogue can alleviate some of these confusing, painful situations, how do we begin this process? Perhaps we

can get involved in an interfaith sharing group in our community. We may hear about an ecumenical prayer service or Bible study. Colleges offer classes in World Religions that focus on sharing ideas. It may be as simple and spontaneous as being open to meeting and talking with those we meet who are from another religion or culture. There are countless opportunities once we begin to look for them.

In talking with those on different faith journeys it is helpful to begin by focusing on what we have in common. As others share their beliefs, we may be surprised by new perspectives on our own faith. Hearing a similar concept expressed in different terminology can awaken a deeper understanding of our own beliefs—ideas that can be integrated into our own experiences.

To dialogue is very different from trying to convince someone about the "truth."

We can learn much, especially from our non-Christian brothers and sisters. From Hindus we may come to greater appreciate their stress on non-violence and the importance of avoiding excesses. Buddhists teach us ways to become more aware of the value of meditation. Muslims may tell us about the many ways Allah is integrated into everyday life. From the Jewish community we can grow in our appreciation of the roots of Christianity and be reminded of Yahweh's active role in the world of today, yesterday, and tomorrow.

There are no limits to the value of faith-sharing. It's rewards can only vaguely be imagined. As we build trust in each other, we discover that we can pray together for oneness not in religion, but in religious acceptance and love. Attitudes of superiority cloud our world view and divide

us. Our willingness to open ourselves to share ideas brings us closer to each other, to those around us, and ultimately, to Truth.

Every encounter in life is truly an encounter with the Ultimate who is continually revealed through others. World peace is dependent upon learning to accept everyone as equal—one person at a time. Truth is one even though its paths are many.

A School of Prayer on Wheels

Philip Solem

"But why don't you take a car?" Melenja had just asked. I looked down into my coffee; it was not the first time I had been asked this.

"Yes," I said, "We could take a car or a plane. Then we would be there and back in no time. But we have chosen to take time, to take three months and devote all that time to praying and greeting and blessing people as we go—all the way to Jerusalem."

My wife and I were sitting with two retirees, Sonja and Melenja, in their kitchen in Vransko, Slovenia. They had just rescued us at nightfall, in their tiny village which had no hotel, no campground. We were cold, wet, and exhausted after a long, rainy day of bicycling. They had fed us, made arrangements for us to stay at the priest's house, and now were curiously probing these two wayfarers who had come into their lives.

My wife, Jackie, and I had decided to bicycle from Paris to Jerusalem. We were on pilgrimage—a long, slow, thoughtful prayer. This was primarily an act of worship, not a vacation trip. We were learning that pilgrimage is a wonderful school of prayer.

Philip and Jackie Solem work part-time as therapists, spiritual directors, and social workers. They live in Minnesota.

In the early spring of 1998, we flew from Minneapolis to Paris, taking our mountain bikes as luggage. Our route took us through France, Germany, Austria, Slovenia—with a side-trip to Medjugorje in Bosnia for Holy Week and Easter. We camped in our tent or found lodging at churches, monasteries or with families in Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Syria, and Jordan. Often we put our bikes on trains or busses because of unpassable mountains, vast distances or scorching heat. Finally in Jerusalem, we passed through the Herod Gate, leaned our bicycles against the city walls, tugged a Bible from the pack and prayed: "I rejoiced when I heard them say, 'Let us go up to the House of the Lord.' And now our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem."

Jackie and I had entered an ancient tradition. For centuries people have been drawn on a spiritual quest to the Holy City. "It is there that the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord," say the Psalms. Going up to Jerusalem is one of the great themes of Scripture. It was a major theme of Jesus' life, and this pilgrim-image is a primary metaphor for each Christian's personal and communal life journey.

When we returned, people asked us how the weather was, how many miles a day we cycled, what our favorite country was. Seldom, if ever, were we asked, "How was your prayer?" Yet that is why we did it. We are not athletes, we are fifty-eight-year-olds with our children raised. We were not on tour, we were at prayer. Going on pilgrimage is like going on retreat—except that on a retreat, one usually withdraws, quiets down, stays put. On pilgrimage one strikes out, moves onward with eyes on a goal. In both modes of prayer, however, the journey is inward. This is why pilgrimage is a school of prayer.

Here is what we learned: The daily intention of moving forward to Jerusalem gave context and meaning to every-

thing we did. Every activity was oriented in this direction, and the fact that the trip was three months long brought a realistic monotony and tedium to much of this activity. I began to see that we were "praying without ceasing," not in the sense that we were always thinking of God or holy things or in some state of constant meditation. Rather, everything we did was a piece of the pilgrimage. Our traveling was not a vacation tour or a study trip but prayer, mostly silent, inarticulate movement. This is the way most of creation prays. "The heavens proclaim the glory of God," Psalm 19 says, "No speech, no voice, no word is heard . . . . "

One morning at breakfast, I sat on the porch with our host, Hamed, in a Syrian village. The swallows were diving and swooping wildly above the orchard just beyond the terrace. Hamed spoke one of the few complete English sentences I heard from him during the twenty-four hours we stayed with his family. Pointing, he said, "The birds believe in God!" Not only God, but this devout Muslim could "hear" the prayer of the birds, the prayer of joyous movement.

"When we return home," said Jackie, "we must continue the pilgrimage." She meant that the clarity of this awareness that every action and word took us one step closer to Jerusalem should instruct us that the same is true of our at-home daily routines of work and family. While most of our activity is secular, all of it is oriented toward the Heavenly Jerusalem. To go forward in our secular work with this right ordering is to pray without ceasing.

There are, of course, distractions from prayer. We were often tempted to wander off our route, sometimes at the genial invitations of our hosts. Come aside, they said, to see this famous museum, that mosque. Surely you are not going to pass straight through our country without turning right to visit this fabulous Crusader castle or turning left to see

the great ruins of our famous ancient city? We had to assess: Is this part of the pilgrimage or a flattening out of our purpose? Are we pilgrims or tourists? Similar questions confront us at home about our use of time and money, about work and recreation, about self-discipline and self-indulgence. The journey of everyday life at home is certainly a prayer-journey, unless we let ourselves become accidental tourists and casual wanderers. Then it is time to return from our distractions and recall who we are and where we are headed. We calmly return to our prayer.

On pilgrimage one strikes out, moves onward with eyes on a goal.

Along the way we employed the elementary grammar of prayer we had learned early in our lives. We prayed the rosary, the full fifteen decades, reflecting the whole-body rhythms of our pedaling. On laborious ascents, on steep mountain grades, we could only pant out brief aspirations, abridged versions of the Jesus Prayer: "Jesus, mercy! Jesus, mercy!" Along the even straightaways we let go of preoccupations and emotions by returning to the "sacred word" in the contemplative rubric of Centering Prayer. Jackie named this her "rolling prayer." When suffering came—and it came frequently, for we were often cold, wet, exhausted, broken down at the side of the road, and always we were homeless—we united ourselves in heartfelt prayer to the Paschal Mystery of the suffering Jesus whose face was always turned toward Jerusalem. He knew he was going to Jerusalem which, for him, meant facing suffering and crucifixion.

As we went from place to place, our prayers of intercession were enriched. We showed people we met a little paragraph translated into Romanian, Hungarian, Slovenian, Bul-

garian, whatever languages we did not speak. It said: "We are Christian pilgrims going to Jerusalem. We are from the United States of America. We live in a small town called Bovey in the state of Minnesota (near Canada). As we go to Jerusalem, we are praying for peace for the world. We greet you in peace and friendship. We ask God to bless you and your family and to bless all the people of this good country." Indeed, we carried many prayer requests from the farms, villages, towns and cities up to Jerusalem. Catholics asked us to remember them on the Mount of Olives; Romanian Orthodox women gave us tapers to light in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; Moslems asked us to pray for them in front of Al Aqsa Mosque on what the Jews call the Temple Mount.

Courtesy of Philip Solem

When at last we came to Al Quds, which is the Arabic name for Jerusalem meaning "The Holy," there was no mistaking this for the Heavenly Jerusalem. The Jerusalem of our day was divided, fratricidal, faithless, sinful, and under judgment as spoken by the prophets. We housed with a Palestinian family in the Arab Quarter of the Old City. We could feel the tension. Israel today is an armed camp. In the Holy City of our day, the threat of murder is everywhere.

This, too, was part of the pilgrimage. Like all the rest, our arrival at journey's end reflected and instructed us about daily life at home. In more than one sense, when we came to Jerusalem, we were coming home. We recognized all its pain and divorce and brokenness because we live with it daily where we hail from. In these ancient streets steeped in holiness and wickedness, we found all about us reminders of our call to follow him who first proclaimed the gospel from this place. We understood afresh our summons to make peace and do the works of justice, to speak truth, and to stand with the oppressed. To pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Here was the deep meaning in Jackie's words: "We must continue the pilgrimage when we return home."

Earth Psalms

June Moreau

I love to awaken with birds
in the crib of morning
to see the first glow of light
and hear the faint splash
from shadows falling.

I love robins nesting in wisteria
violets, lilies of the valley
and showers of petals
from Japanese cherry.

I love buttermilk
from a tall yellow glass
and the delirium of dandelions
in lush green grass.

I love the white moth
flitting along the path . . .
I think it flew from a window
into a dark gray stone.

June Moreau is a frequent contributor to Sacred Journey *from Lexington, MA.*

I love the oriole singing
waters bubbling from the hillside spring
and swifts twittering and swirling
unravelling strands of sky.

I love the growing candles
on the pines
that have stars for flames
and the moon peering
from her cloud balcony
silvering the meadow.

Charles McVicker

Prayer

Thad Box

God give me
strength
wisdom
to cut through this mess
and put my
experience
knowledge
energy
toward making things better for
one hectare
one person
one idea
God help me define
sustainable development
sustainable lifestyles
sustainable
human dignity
Love
I am weak
listening
reacting rather than
doing
move me, Lord
make me act
in Love.

O God we are one with you . . .

Thomas Merton

O God we are one with you . . .
Help us to realize that there can be no
understanding where there is mutual rejection.

O God, in accepting one another
wholeheartedly, fully, completely, we accept you,
and we thank you, and we adore you;
and we love you with our whole being,
    because our being is in your being,
    our spirit is rooted in your spirit.

Fill us then with love, and let us be bound
together with love as we go our diverse ways,
united in this one spirit which makes you
present to the world,
and which makes you witness to the ultimate
reality that is love.

Love has overcome.

Love is victorious.

Amen.

Thad Box is an ecologist and professor emeritus at Utah State University. The prayer of Trappist monk, Thomas Merton, is found in The Gift of Prayer: A Fellowship in Prayer Book.

A Treasury of Personal Prayer From The World's Spiritual Traditions

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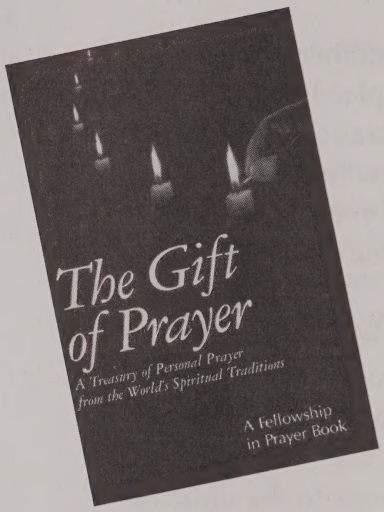

The prayers in this book were selected for their simplicity, beauty, and power of expression, and above all for their value as prayers for our daily use—prayers that might reflect and express our hope, our suffering, our joy, our gratitude. They come from great writers and great sources, ancient and modern, Eastern and Western, Christian and non-Christian—from English, Irish, Jewish, and African to Asian, Hindu, and Native American.

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-Thomas Moore

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-Karen Sanders, Chaplain
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